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Major News Releases and Speeches

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USDA REVISES WHEAT IMPORT RULES

WASHINGTON, Aug. 19—Entry regulations on wheat imports that could carry foreign diseases of grain are being changed, effective Aug. 23, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials said today.

"We want to ensure that flag smut and karnal bunt—destructive diseases of wheat and certain other grains—are kept out of the United States," said Harvey L. Ford, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Imports of wheat, wheat products except flour, and certain other items from Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Mexico and Pakistan are affected by the restrictions.

Flag smut is a fungus disease that can reduce wheat yields. Regulations already on the books prohibit imports of wheat and wheat products from infected countries. The revised regulations provide that live plants of susceptible species, including wheat and goatgrass, be added to the list of prohibited items.

Karnal bunt is also caused by a fungus. Besides reducing yields, it imparts a disagreeable taste and odor to flour. In addition to wheat, triticale and durum wheat are susceptible.

"All of the named countries except Mexico are infected with both flag smut and karnal bunt," Ford said. Mexico, however, does not have flag smut, so until karnal bunt was confirmed there recently, existing flag smut regulations served to protect U.S. agriculture against karnal bunt as well."

The addition of Mexico to the regulations, and the specific mention of karnal bunt, will serve to exclude both disease threats, he said.

Ford said karnal bunt was confirmed last spring in parts of the Sonora Valley in northwest Mexico where much of Mexico's wheat crop is grown, including some seed wheat normally exported to the United States.

Of additional concern, he said, was finding the disease in a research facility widely used by U.S. wheat breeders as a source of wheat germplasm.

"We had to put an immediate ban on commercial wheat imports to protect U.S. farmers," Ford said, "and as a further safeguard, we put strict conditions on imports of wheat for scientific research."

The revised regulations are scheduled to be published in the Aug. 23 Federal Register. Written comments may be sent, until Oct. 24, to Thomas O. Gessell, Director, Regulatory Coordination Staff, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA Room 637 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

#

BLOCK, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, GOVERNORS TO MEET ON DROUGHT

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has scheduled a meeting Sept. 2 in Chicago with the governors and members of Congress from 26 drought-affected states to discuss problems brought about by this summer's continuing hot, dry weather.

Block said he expects to receive a thorough briefing and evaluation of the drought's effects which he then will forward to President Ronald Reagan.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. EDT at the O'Hare Airport Hilton Hotel in Chicago.

Governors and members of Congress from the following states have been invited to the meeting:

Arizona	Michigan	Pennsylvania
Delaware	Minnesota	South Carolina
Georgia	Missouri	South Dakota
Illinois	Nebraska	Tennessee
Indiana	New Jersey	Texas
Iowa	North Carolina	Virginia
Kansas	North Dakota	West Virginia
Kentucky	Ohio	Wisconsin
Maryland	Oklahoma	

#

USDA PROPOSES TO INCREASE RATES FOR MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to increase the overtime rate charged to meat and poultry plants from \$19.40 to \$19.76 per hour to cover the increased costs of providing inspection services.

Also under the proposal, the hourly rate for voluntary inspection and certification services would increase from \$16.68 to \$17.12, said Donald L. Houston, administrator of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. The hourly costs for laboratory work will remain at \$31 per hour, he said.

Under the federal meat and poultry inspection laws, USDA must assume all inspection costs during routine working hours in plants producing meat and poultry products for interstate or foreign commerce. However, USDA is authorized to charge plants for all mandatory inspection service exceeding 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week, for laboratory work and for voluntary inspection and certification services.

"Each year, the agency reviews fees for inspection services and prepares a cost analysis to determine if such fees are adequate to recover the government's costs," Houston said.

The proposal will be published in the Aug. 24 Federal Register. Written comments should be sent by Sept. 25, to: Regulations Office, Attention: Annie Johnson, FSIS Hearing Clerk, Room 2637, South Agriculture Building, Washington, D.C. 20250.

#

NEW TECHNOLOGIES SEEN SPEEDING GROWTH OF SOYBEAN INDUSTRY

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W. Va., Aug. 23—Genetic engineering and other biotechnologies will stir dynamic growth and change for the soybean industry in the years ahead, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

Orville G. Bentley, assistant secretary of agriculture for science and education, today told how researchers will help the industry cope with many of the coming changes at the 54th annual meeting here of the National Soybean Processors' Association.

Despite the problems, the soybean industry has an "exciting future," said Bentley.

"Soybeans represent a vital renewable resource important to future world food supplies and to the development of industrial materials from agricultural chemicals," he said.

Continued growth in the competitive world marketplace, said Bentley, will require the soybean industry to focus its attention on (1) protecting the industry's capacity to produce, (2) environmental concerns such as conserving soil and water resources, (3) post-harvest technology and (4) developing the human resources—trained scientists and skilled technicians.

Continuing increases in state and U.S. average yields mirror the success of research, said Bentley.

Bentley said the U.S. average yield reached a new high in 1982—32 bushels, up from 24 bushels in 1965—and, he said, the potential for further increases is great. Because of the drought and other reasons, the average yield will be 29.7 bushels per acre this year.

To attract exceptional young scientists to agricultural research, USDA's Agricultural Research Service is offering 21 appointments to post-doctoral research associate positions. The projects involve basic research funded under the agency's Talcott W. Edminster research associate award program.

Of the \$45.1 million spent in 1981 for publicly supported soybean research, \$23.2 million was from federal sources, and \$21.8 million came from state and local sources, Bentley said.

"USDA and the land-grant college system are committed to conducting and supporting research essential to the continued economic vitality of the soybean industry . . . through such means as improved germplasm, disease and nematode resistance, production systems, new uses and new systems for storage and distribution," he said.

"Longtime needs continue," Bentley said. "Farmers still fight the soybean cyst nematode, brown stem rot, soybean mosaic virus, phytophthora rot, stem canker and other diseases and insect pests. The

challenge is to explore the merits of new technologies in solving some of these longtime problems."

In mapping future strategy for USDA's science and education agencies, policy makers have identified eight priorities for USDA's budget for fiscal 1985: (1) mission oriented basic research, (2) development of scientific expertise, (3) communications technology, (4) developing the nation's export markets, (5) sustaining soil productivity, (6) human nutrition, (7) water management and (8) forest and range productivity enhancement.

Bentley emphasized genetic engineering as an emerging tool with the longrange potential for accelerating the development of new soybean varieties for the 1990's and the 21st century.

For example, he said, scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service and with agricultural experiment stations in Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee next month will announce the release of a new soybean variety—EPPS. It resists the soybean cyst nematode, soybean mosaic virus, phytophthora rot and has demonstrated some resistance to the root-knot nematode and stem canker.

Seed of a new soybean variety resistant to brown stem rot, developed by the research agency's scientists at Iowa State University, is being made available to growers.

At Stoneville, Miss., scientists working to develop productive soybean breeding lines and varieties for the southern United States, have introduced a new variety, Tracy M. In addition to having qualities that make its parent successful in clay soils, Tracy M. is tolerant of the herbicide to which the parent is sensitive.

Traits such as increased tolerance to widely used herbicides and resistance to drought, salinity and other stresses may be altered much more precisely and rapidly in the future with new technologies, Bentley said. A dramatic breakthrough toward eliminating photorespiration also has the potential for unlocking new levels of productivity.

USDA's soybean germplasm collection now numbers more than 10,000 accessions.

Exchanges of plant materials native to eastern Asia have been worked out with the Peoples' Republic of China. The Chinese germplasm are expected to provide new sources of resistance to

diseases, nematodes and insects, as well as tolerance to drought and other environmental stresses.

#

JULY FOOD PRICE INDEX UNCHANGED

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23—The consumer price index for food in July was unchanged from the June level (before seasonal adjustment), according to the monthly consumer price index released today by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Prices for food bought in grocery stores fell 0.1 percent in July, and were the same level as they were a year earlier. Prices for food away from home rose 0.2 percent in July, and were 4 percent above a year ago.

According to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture William Leshner, "These changes reflect the continued moderation in food price increases expected this year. Continued large supplies of farm foods will keep overall food prices from increasing for the rest of this year."

Leshner said this will be the fifth consecutive year in which food price increases have been significantly below the rate of inflation in the rest of the economy.

While higher feed costs resulting from the drought will eventually lead to less meat production next year, output will be only slightly below the record level of meat supplies available in 1983. Resulting food price increases in 1984 are still not likely to exceed the rate of price increases in the non-food sector, he said.

Retail meat prices decreased by 0.9 percent in July due to larger supplies of beef and pork. Pork prices fell 1.1 percent, and beef prices dropped 1 percent. This brought the CPI for meats in July to a level 3.9 percent below July a year ago.

The CPI for poultry rose 2.3 percent. However, poultry prices remained 0.8 percent below July of last year.

The CPI for fresh vegetables in July was also slightly below year earlier levels. Fresh vegetable prices dropped 5 percent, primarily the result of a 23 percent drop in lettuce prices. The CPI for fresh fruit rose 5.2 percent due to seasonally lower supplies of oranges.

July Retail Food Prices, Percent Change for Selected Items

Items	June to July		July 1982 to July 1983
	Not seasonally adjusted	Seasonally adjusted	
	Percent change		
All food	0.0	-0.1	1.2
Food away from home	0.2	0.1	4.0
Food at home	-0.1	-0.1	0.0
Meats	-0.9	-1.3	-3.9
Beef and veal	-1.0	-0.7	-3.8
Pork	-1.1	-2.9	-5.4
Other meats	-0.2	*	-1.9
Poultry	2.3	*	-0.8
Eggs	2.4	-1.1	2.5
Fish and seafood	-0.6	-0.9	-0.4
Dairy products	0.0	*	0.9
Fats and oils	0.3	*	-0.1
Cereals and bakery prods.	0.4	*	3.3
Fruits and vegetables	0.2	0.3	-0.3
Nonalcoholic beverages	-0.5	-0.1	1.4
Sugar and sweets	0.4	*	1.8
Other prepared foods	0.3	*	3.3

* A seasonally adjusted index is not available for these items.

#

MISSISSIPPI LIVESTOCK PRODUCER CHARGED WITH SPREADING BRUCELLOSIS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24—A Mississippi livestock producer is the first person to be charged with violating federal animal quarantine laws under new administrative procedures that bypass the federal courts, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said.

Robert K. Van Devender of DeKalb, Miss., was charged with shipping a cow to a slaughter plant without branding it with the required "S" to warn people that the cow had been exposed to brucellosis, according to Bert W. Hawkins, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. The agency is asking that if the charge is upheld, Van Devender be fined \$300.

"Until recently, such violations could be prosecuted only through the federal court system," Hawkins said. "However, the system's huge backlog of cases has made this into a cumbersome and lengthy process.

"Quarantine violation cases have often been in the court system well over a year between initial charging and final resolution. That's neither effective enforcement of the law nor fair to persons accused of violating federal regulations."

Van Devender has 20 days to respond to the USDA charge and can request an oral hearing to defend himself before an administrative law judge. Failure to answer constitutes admission of the charge.

Federal animal health regulations permit interstate movement of cattle infected or exposed to brucellosis only for immediate slaughter or to a quarantined feedlot. Such movement requires appropriate branding and a permit.

"Most members of the cattle industry are concerned about preventing the spread of animal diseases and, therefore, comply fully with quarantine regulations," Hawkins said. "The new administrative procedures will help us be more effective in protecting this cooperative majority of the industry, as well as the non-farming public, from the few individuals who violate quarantines for personal gain."

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease of cattle that causes serious economic losses because of aborted calves, breeding problems and lower milk yields. In recent years incidence has been low, but the disease could spread rapidly if infected or exposed animals were allowed to move without control.

With present methods of pasteurizing milk and inspecting meat, brucellosis is not a current consumer hazard. The disease does represent an occupational risk to livestock handlers and slaughter plant workers who contact infected animals or their freshly killed carcasses.

#

NOBEL LAUREATE TO PRESENT HENDRICKS MEMORIAL LECTURE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24—Melvin Calvin, a Nobel prize-winning scientist in chemistry, will present the 1983 Sterling B. Hendricks Memorial Lecture Aug. 30 in Washington, D.C.

Calvin will give his lecture, "Energy Agriculture," before the American Chemical Society at its annual meeting. The lecture is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service.

Terry B. Kinney, Jr., administrator of the research agency, said this lecture is the third in a yearly series which commemorates the life and work of the late Sterling B. Hendricks, who he called "a Renaissance man in the sciences."

Kinney said that Hendricks, who spent most of his career with the research agency, established principles that today are essential for basic understanding of several fields, especially plant physiology. His research has yielded important discoveries in physical, organic and biological chemistry.

In recent years, Calvin has done research in coupling photosynthetic principles with basic studies in solar energy, aimed at finding new ways to use biomass as a source of energy.

Calvin has served on many scientific boards for the U.S. government, including the Science Advisory Committee under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. He received the Nobel Prize in 1961 for his work in photosynthesis.

A native of St. Paul, Minn., Calvin earned his doctorate in chemistry from the University of Minnesota. In 1937, he joined the staff of the chemistry department of the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of more than 600 monographs and seven books and holds several patents.

Calvin has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society of London and the Japan Academy.

#

ARRIVAL STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE JOHN R. BLOCK

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24—This is the statement by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block upon his arrival in Moscow today.

"I am pleased to be here to sign a new long-term grain agreement with the Soviet Union.

"The agreement, which will be signed tomorrow, represents long hours of work by negotiating teams of both sides and I believe the result of their work will be of benefit to the agricultural sectors of both countries.

"For American farmers, it means an important commercial agricultural relationship will be maintained and export levels enhanced.

"The agreement offers the Soviet Union the opportunity to plan for the future with greater assurance of supplies adequate to the objective sought.

"Finally, this accord marks a return to a more normal commercial agricultural relationship between the world's leading exporter of grains and the world's largest grain importer.

"My colleagues and I look forward to the meeting tomorrow and the signing of this important document for agricultural trade."

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LTA SIGNING STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE JOHN R. BLOCK

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25—This is the statement by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block at the signing of the long-term U.S. grain sales agreement in Moscow today:

"This is an important occasion for agriculture in the United States and in the Soviet Union.

"I commend the negotiators from both sides who traveled far and worked long hours to produce the agreement that made this event possible.

"The document we are signing today signifies our mutual desire to continue a commercial agricultural relationship that has been profitable for American farmers and beneficial to the Soviet Union.

"This agreement reaffirms the determination of the United States to be a reliable supplier of grain to reliable customers for grain. I am very pleased to sign it, and I am confident it will provide the basis for a strong and growing commercial agricultural relationship between our two countries."

#

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS ON THE SUPPLY OF GRAIN

The Government of the United States of America ("USA") and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ("USSR"),

Recalling the "Basic Principles of Relations between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" of May 29, 1972 and other relevant agreements between them;

Desiring to strengthen long-term cooperation between the two countries on the basis of mutual benefit and equality;

Mindful of the importance which the production of food, particularly grain, has for the peoples of both countries;

Recognizing the need to stabilize trade in grain between the two countries; and

Affirming their conviction that cooperation in the field of trade will contribute to overall improvement of relations between the two countries;

Have agreed as follows:

Article I

The Government of the USA and the Government of the USSR hereby enter into an agreement for the purchase and sale of wheat and corn for supply to the USSR. To this end, during the period that this agreement is in force, except as otherwise agreed by the Parties, the Soviet foreign trade organizations shall purchase from private commercial sources, for shipment in each twelve-month period beginning October 1, 1983, nine million metric tons of wheat and corn

grown in the USA; in doing so, the Soviet foreign trade organizations, if interested, may purchase, on account of the said quantity, soybeans and/or soybean meal produced in the USA, in the proportion of one ton of soybeans and/or soybean meal for two tons of grain. In any case, the minimum annual quantities of wheat and corn shall be no less than four million metric tons each.

The Soviet foreign trade organizations may increase the nine million metric tons quantity mentioned above without consultations by as much as three million metric tons of wheat and/or corn for shipment in each twelve-month period beginning October 1, 1983.

The Government of the USA shall employ its good offices to facilitate and encourage such sales by private commercial sources.

Purchases/sales of commodities under this Agreement will be made at the market price prevailing for these products at the time of purchase/sale and in accordance with normal commercial terms.

Article II

During the term of this Agreement, except as otherwise agreed by the Parties, the Government of the USA shall not exercise any discretionary authority available to it under United States law to control exports of commodities purchased for supply to the USSR in accordance with Article I.

Article III

In carrying out their obligations under this Agreement, the Soviet foreign trade organizations shall endeavor to space their purchases in the USA and shipment to the USSR as evenly as possible over each twelve-month period.

Article IV

The Government of the USSR shall assure that, except as the Parties may otherwise agree, all commodities grown in the USA and purchased by Soviet foreign trade organizations under this Agreement shall be supplied for consumption in the USSR.

Article V

Whenever the Government of the USSR wishes the Soviet foreign trade organizations to be able to purchase more wheat or corn grown in the USA than the amounts specified in Article I, it shall notify the Government of the USA.

Whenever the Government of the USA wishes private commercial sources to be able to sell to the USSR more wheat or corn grown in the USA than the amounts specified in Article I, it shall notify the Government of the USSR.

In both instances, the Parties will consult as soon as possible in order to reach agreement on possible quantities of grain to be supplied to the USSR prior to purchase/sale or conclusion of contracts for the purchase/sale of grain in amounts above those specified in Article I.

Article VI

The Government of the USA is prepared to use its good offices, as appropriate and within the laws in force in the USA, to be of assistance on questions of the appropriate quality of the grain to be supplied from the USA to the USSR.

Article VII

It is understood that the shipment of commodities from the USA to the USSR under this Agreement shall be in accord with the provisions of the American-Soviet Agreement on Maritime Matters which is in force during the period of shipments hereunder.

Article VIII

The Parties shall hold consultations concerning the implementation of this Agreement and related matters at intervals of six months, and at any other time at the request of either party.

Article IX

This Agreement shall enter into force on execution and shall remain in force until September 30, 1988, unless extended by the Parties for a mutually agreed period.

DONE at Moscow this twenty-fifth day of August, 1983, in duplicate, each in the English and Russian languages, both texts being equally authentic.

For The Government Of The
United States Of America:

/s/ John R. Block
USA Secretary of Agriculture

For The Government Of The Union
Of Soviet Socialist Republics:

/s/ Nikolai Patolichev
USSR Minister for Foreign Trade

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DEPARTURE STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE JOHN R. BLOCK

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26—This is the statement by Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block upon his departure from Moscow today:

"This week has represented for me the accomplishment of a goal for which I have been working since I took office as secretary of agriculture: the restoration for American farmers of full opportunity in the Soviet market for agricultural products.

"The five-year agreement we signed yesterday provides the basis for renewal and expansion of a commercial relationship that propelled the Soviet Union to the forefront as a purchaser of U.S. grain.

"The agreement opens a new and exciting chapter in this trade association, one that holds promise for the food and agriculture sectors of both countries.

"I am pleased to have had the opportunity to sign it as a representative of the U.S. government and of the American farmer. I look forward to its implementation in a way that will benefit both the United States and the Soviet Union."

#

USDA PROPOSES REVISING GRADE STANDARDS FOR SUMMER SQUASH

WASHINGTON, Aug. 25—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today proposed revising the U.S. grade standards for summer squash to permit inspectors to calculate percentages of offsize and defective squash by count rather than by weight.

USDA invites public comments on the proposal until Oct. 25.

Charles Brader, a marketing official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said comparative studies confirm that computing percentages by count can reduce lot inspection time up to 50 percent without affecting the accuracy of grade certification.

The Agricultural Marketing Service establishes grade standards and provides official inspection for many food products. Use of the grading service is voluntary and paid for by the user.

The proposal is scheduled to be published in the Aug. 26 Federal Register, available at many public libraries. Written comments should be sent in duplicate to the Hearing Clerk, USDA, Rm. 1077-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, where anyone may see them.

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USDA EXTENDS COMMENT PERIOD ON MARINE MAMMAL RULES FROM AUG. 29 TO SEPT. 30

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26—Officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture have extended until Sept. 30 the public comment period for changes in rules concerning the humane care, treatment and transportation of marine mammals.

The original 30-day comment period was to end Aug. 29, said John K. Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"I want to make sure that marine parks and others licensed to handle and show marine mammals are individually notified and have an opportunity to comment on this proposal," Atwell said.

Atwell said USDA was also extending the variances previously allowed for marine mammal facilities until comments are received and the new rules become final.

The changes in regulations deal mainly with facilities, equipment and environmental conditions for captive Cetaceans—whales, porpoises and dolphins; Sirenians—dugongs and manatees; polar bears; sea otters; and Pinnepeds—seals, sealions and walruses.

Since existing variances in facilities for these animals expire Sept. 20, USDA is granting an automatic extension to process the new regulations. USDA expects to provide another automatic 60-day extension to allow people to bring facilities up to the new standards, Atwell said.

Send written comments to: Thomas O. Gessel, director, Regulatory Coordination Staff, APHIS, USDA, 728 Federal Bldg., Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Comments may be inspected at that address from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

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PLANT VARIETY PROTECTION BOARD TO MEET

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26—The Plant Variety Protection Advisory Board will meet here Sept. 23, an official of the U.S. Department of Agriculture said today.

The meeting will be held in Room 2096, South Agriculture Bldg., 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Vern F. Highley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the board will consider updating variety files, technical variety information, funding, fee adjustments, amended regulations and the question of converting program work to microcomputers. An appeal of the commissioner's decision of an application for variety protection also will be reviewed.

Highley said the meeting is open to the public with the exception of the time devoted to the appeal review. That part of the meeting will be closed because information to be discussed is confidential.

The Plant Variety Protection Advisory Board advises the secretary of agriculture on matters relating to the adoption of rules and regulations to carry out work under the Plant Variety Protection Act.

Information on the meeting is available from Kenneth H. Evans, executive secretary, Plant Variety Protection Board, National Agricultural Library Building, Beltsville, Md. 20705, phone: (301) 344-2518.

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